

Message Text

SECRET

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3579

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 3 CANBERRA 4779

NOFORN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR, AS

SUBJ: DEPLOYMENT OF NEW TRANET EQUIPMENT

REF: DMA MSG 011914Z JUN 78

1. BEGIN SUMMARY THE GOA IS FACING ANOTHER POTENTIAL
POLITICAL PROBLEM SIMILAR TO TH RECENT FLAP AT NORTH
WEST CAPE INVOLVING THE CONTINUING OPERATION OF TRANET
IN AUSTRALIA. FOR REASONS EXPLAINED BELOW, ADOD CAN BE
SUBJECTED TO THE CHARGE THAT IT FAILED TO KEEP AUSTRALIAN
MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADERS INFORMED OF THE MILITARY
IMPLICATIONS OF THE SYSTEM. WE RECOMMEND NEGOTIATING A
NEW US-GOA AGREEMENT COVERING TRANET IF IT IS DETERMINED
THAT SYSTEM 112 REMAINS ESSENTIAL TO US AND AUSTRALIAN
INTERESTS. END SUMMARY.

2. IF TWO EVENTS CONSTITUTE A SERIES, THEN TRANET
SURFACES AS THE SECOND IN A SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS ON
OPERATION OF "US FACILITIES" IN AUSTRALIA. TRANET
EMERGED ON 16 JUNE AS A "PROBLEM" PERCEIVED BY ADOD AND
EMB AS POTENTIALLY MORE DIFFICULT THAN HAROLD E. HOLT
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(NWC). THE TIRGGER WAS REFTTEL WITH ITS
REFERENCE TO PLANNED INTRODUCTION OF NEW EQUIPMENT.
THE TRANET PROBLEM PARALLELS HAROLD E. HOLT IN THAT
ADOD FACES AN INTERNAL "LEFT HAND - RIGHT HAND" COMM-
UNICATIONS PROBLEM. IN ADOD'S VIEW, IT APPEARS
THE US MAY HAVE UNWITTINGLY PARTICIPATED IN CREATING
THE PROBLEM, HENCE HAS SOME OBLIGATION TO ASSIST IN THE

SOLUTION. THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF THE TRANET FLAP (FOR THE AUSTRALIANS) IS THAT THE "POLICY" LEVEL IS UNAWARE OF ALL THE DETAILS AND SYSTEM IMPLICATIONS. UNDER ADVICE OF EMB OFFICIALS, THERE IS RELUCTANT AUSTRALIAN ACCEPTANCE THAT THOSE AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL (WITH REQUISITE CLEARANCES) ARE FULLY INFORMED. THE MAJOR PART OF THE PROBLEM IS AN UNCLASSIFIED FACILITY (WITNESS REF A), PART OF THE PRODUCT OF WHICH CAN ONLY BE DISCUSSED AMONG THOSE HAVING PROPER CLEARANCES.

3. ON 16 JUNE 78, AT THE REQUEST OF ADOD FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY R.N. HAMILTON, EMB REPS WERE ASKED TO MEET REGARDING TRANET. EMBASSY WAS REPRESENTED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR AND ACTING DEFENSE ATTACHE. THE MEETING, CHAIRED BY HAMILTON, WAS ATTENDED BY ADOD, ASST, SECRETARY P. HUNT, TWO REPS FROM SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND DIRECTOR SURVEY (COL. J. HILLIER) WHO SERVES AS TECHNICAL LINK BETWEEN ADOD AND DMA RE-TRANET; HOLDS NECESSARY CLEARANCES; IS SCHEDULED TO VISIT DMA IN MID-JUNE RE TRANET, AND WHO WAS HIGHLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE US TO HIS POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGE. FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS THE MEETING WAS DELICATE -- NOT THE LEAST OF REASONS WAS THAT ONE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ATTENDEES DID NOT HOLD CLEARANCES ENABLING FULL DISCUSSIONS. FOR OPENERS, EMB REPS WERE GIVEN COPY OF REFTEL (WHICH WE ALREADY HAD) AND AN EXTRACT OF HANSARD (AUG77) HIGH-SECRET

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LIGHTING TWO PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS RELATING TO FACILITIES OPERATION. BOTH QUESTIONS WERE DIRECTED BY SEN. CAVANAGH (AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY) WITH NOTICE TO THE MINISTER REPRESENTING DEF MIN (SEN. WITHERS). THE FIRST QUESTION CONCERNED TREATIES/AGREEMENTS GOVERNING ESTABLISHMENT OF FACILITIES. THE SECOND AND MORE GERMANE QUESTION AND ANSWER IS QUOTED: BEGIN TEXT. 1. DOES THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OPERATE AN ESTABLISHMENT KNOWN AS TRANSIT STATION 112 AT SMITHFIELD, SOUTH AUSTRALIA. 2. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STATION. 3. UNDER WHAT AGREEMENT WAS THE STATION ESTABLISHED. (1) NO. (2) THE INSTALLATION AT SMITHFIELD IS A PASSIVE RECEIVER OF RADIO SIGNALS FROM SATELLITES WHICH EMIT ON ITS WAVE-LENGTH. IT DOES NOT SEND SIGNALS TO SATELLITES. THE SIGNALS IT RECEIVES RELATE EXCLUSIVELY TO THE SATELLITES' LOCATIONS IN ORBITS. IT HAS FUNCTIONED IN THIS WAY FOR 16 YEARS IN CONJUNCTION WITH A SUCCESSION OF SATELLITES. IT IS NOT A CLASSIFIED INSTALLATION. THE EQUIPMENT WAS MOUNTED ORIGINALLY IN 1961 TO RECEIVE SIGNALS FROM US NAVY NAVIGATIONAL SATELLITES KNOWN AS "TRANSIT", BUT BECAME REDUNDANT TO THE US NAVY PROGRAM TOWARDS THE END OF THE 1960S. RATHER THAN SEE THE INSTALLATION CLOSED

DOWN, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IN 1971 TOOK OVER ITS OPERATION BECAUSE THE POSITION-FIXING SIGNALS IT COULD RECEIVE FROM REMAINING TRANSIT AND OTHER SATELLITES WERE USEFUL TO GEODETIC AND OTHER SURVEY AND MAPPING WORK. BOTH THE DIVISION OF NATIONAL MAPPING AND THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY SURVEY COPRS HAD AND HAVE RETAINED AN INTEREST IN THIS DATA. CONSIDERATION WAS GIVEN EARLIER THE YEAR TO CLOSING THE INSTALLATION DOWN FOR BUDGETARY REASONS, BUT IT HAS BEEN DECIDED TO KEEP IT OPERATING FOR THE TIME BEING.

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(3) THE INSTALLATION WAS ESTABLISHED AND ORIGINALLY OPERATED UNDER AN AUSTRALIAN-UNITED STATES AGREEMENT SIGNED ON 5 JUNE 1961 RELATING TO THE TRANSIT PROGRAM (SEE TREATY SERIES 1961, NO. 10) BUT AS INDICATED ABOVE, IT LATER BECAME REDUNDANT TO THAT PROGRAM AND WAS LEFT IN SITU TO BE OPERATED BY THE (THEN) AUSTRALIAN DEPARTMENT OF SUPPLY. END TEXT.

COMPLICATING WHAT IS IN AUSTRALIAN EYES A LESS THAN ACCURAE RESPONSE, IS FACT THAT FORMER ALP PM AND PRESENT OPPOSITION LEADER HAVE BEEN GIVEN SIMILAR "NON-BRIEFINGS" ON TRANET. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ADOD HOLDS METICULOUS FILE ON TRANET, E.G., TWO FORMAL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION DATED 18 AND 22 JUNE 71, AND A US "NON-RESPONSE" OF EARLY JULY 71. THIS RESPONSE FORMED THE BASIS OF THE "NON-BRIEFINGS" GIVEN WHITLAM IN 73 AND HAYDEN THIS YEAR. NOTE: ADOD TERMED THEM "NON-BRIEFINGS AND NON-RESPONSE." IT IS RELEVANT THAT BOTH THE 1971 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND BRIEFINGS

CAME FROM ADOD OFFICIALS WHO DID AND DO NOT NOW HOLD
REQUISITE CLEARANCE. IN ESSENCE THEN, THE WRONG PEOPLE
ASKED THE QUESTIONS AND WERE GIVEN THE ONLY POSSIBLE
ANSWER UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. HEREIN MAY LIE OUR
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UNWITTING CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROBLEM-- ONE THAT IS
REAL, DESPITE US EFFORTS TO KEEP THOSE PROPERLY CLEARED,
PROPERLY INFORMED. HAMILTON CLEARLY STATED THAT MAIN-
TAINING THIS STANCE WAS POINTEDLY IRRELEVANT SINCE ADOD
AND THE GOVERNMENT RATHER THAN TECHINCIA NS FACE A SERIOUS
"CREDIBILITY" PROBLEM THAT COULD HAVE BEEN AVOIDED (BY THEM)
HAD THEY BEEN PRIVY TO ALL INFORMATION, SOME OF WHICH MAY
HAVE REQUIRED DUCKING (PROPERLY) BECAUSE OF CLASSIFICATION,
E.G. THE "NO" RESPONSE GIVEN TO CAVANAGH CAN BE DUCKED SINCE
THE TRANET OPERATOR OF LONG-STANDING IS AUSTRALIAN.

4. COMPLICATING ANNOUNCEMENT OF US INTENTIONS TO
UPGRADE STATION EQUIPMENT IS FACT THAT NO FORMAL AGREE-
MENT COVERS TRANET OPERATION -- AGAIN AN AUSTRALIAN
PERCEPTION IN WHICH WE SEE A MEASURE OF CREDIBLE
SUBSTANCE. THE "ORIGINAL" AGREEMENT WAS BETWEEN THE
THEN US ARMY MAPPING AGENCY AND THE AUSTRALIAN DEPT.
OF SUPPLY. BOTH THESE AGENCIES ARE NOW DEF. VICE SVC.
ELEMENTS. ACCORDINGLY, AND IN LINE WITH STATED AUSTRALIAN
DESIRE TO REMAIN INVOLVED IN TRANET; THIS MAY BE THE
TIME TO CONSIDER AN AGREEMENT, OR AT A MINIMUM A HIGH
LEVEL PROPOSAL REGARDING AN AGREEMENT. THIS WOULD, IN
ADOD'S MIND HELP EXTRICATE THEM FROM THE PRESENT PROBLEM
BY CREATING A "NEW SITUATION THAT COULD BE PRESENTED IN
THAT CONTEXT. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT ADOD APPEARS
PREOCCUPIED WITH THE "SINISTER" ASPECTS OF TRANET.-- THEIR
GUESS IS IT PROVIDES HIGH RESOLUTION INTELLIGENCE DATA FOR
TARGETING PURPOSES. WHEN EMB REPS SUGGESTED THE US WAS
CONTEMPLATING REMOVAL OF THE SYSTEM IN 1971(GIVING
AUSTRALIA OPTION TO RETAIN AND PROVIDE FUNDING LESS OVER-
TIME AND COMMUNICATION LINK COSTS), ADOD REPS PARTIALLY
ACKNOWLEDGED THE POINT, BUT
INSISTED ANOTHER US AGENCY PUSHED FOR RETENTION (IMPLIES
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A "DARK SIDE" OF THE US INTENTION). WE DROPPED THIS LINE
BECAUSE WE DID NOT WANT TO DISCUSS MORE SENSITIVE
"SOURCE" SYSTEMS. WE ARE CONCERNED HERE THAT THE
HAROLD E. HOLT AND NOW TRANET DISCUSSIONS COULD PORTEND
FUTURE TALKS REGARDING OTHER FACILITIES THAT COULD

DISADVANTAGE US BEST INTEREST, AND POSSIBLY COMPLI-
CATE BASIC RELATIONS WITH AUSTRALIA AGAIN TO OUR DIS-
ADVANTAGE -- THIS COULD BE ESPECIALLY TRUE IF A "LONG
MEMORIED" ALP REGAINS POLITICAL POWER. AS REGARDS THE AGREEMENT,
HAMILTON INDICATED THEY WERE UNDER SOME PRESSURE TO EXPLAIN
TRANET ANNUAL COSTS(APPROX. (A)\$
30,000) TO THE AUDITOR GNERAL, BUT WERE ABLE TO HOLD HIM OFF SINCE
THE AMOUNT IN QUESTION IS RELATIVELY LOW.

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5. HOPEFULLY IT IS CLEAR FROM THE PRECEDING THAT THE
AUSTRALIANS VIEW TRANET AS A VERY COMPLEX, SENSITIVE
PROBLEM. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT'S ANY LONGER USEFUL TO
RELY ON POSITION THAT WE KEPT TECHNICAL LEVELS INFORMED
BECAUSE THIS COULD LEAD TO A SERIES OF DELICATE DIS-
CUSSIONS ON OTHER JOINT FACILITY INVOLVEMENT. ADOD
SENSES AN URGENCY TO RECTIFY "PAST MISTAKES" RE TRANET.
SINCE HANSARD AND REF A ARE UNCLAS, THERE IS SOME CONCERN
THAT THE LIKES OF BRIAN TOOHEY (DEF. REPORTER, FIN. REV.)
WHO RETURNS TODAY FROM COVERING THE PM'S TRIP COULD USE
TRANET TO BUILD ON THE HAROLD E. HOLT ISSUE AND CREATE
A FIRST RATE POINT OF EMBARRASSMENT FOR THE GOVERNMENT.
(COINCIDENTAL WITH THE TRANET DISCUSSIONS, A GROUP
KNOWN AS THE AUSTRALIAN INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT WAS
PLACARDING CARS AROUND THE DEF. COMPLEX WITH A FLYER
BANNERED " US LIES ON NORTH WEST CAPE." WHILE THE EMB
VIEWS THIS AS A NON-EVENT, A SECOND INCIDENT ALBIET
"CREATED" WOULD SERVE NO ONES BEST INTEREST). HAVING
STATED HIS CONCERN, HAMILTON SEEKS THE FOLLOWING INFOR-

MATION AND ADVANCES THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATION AS
MATTERS OF PRIORITY: (A) QUESTIONS: IS TRANET A
MATTER OF PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE IN THE US, AND IF NOT, CAN IT
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BECOME SO; ARE THERE ASPECTS THAT MUST REMAIN CLASSIFIED?
HAS TRANET BEEN THE TOPIC OF CONGRESSIONAL DISCUSSIONS
(OTHER THAN BUDGETARY), AND IF SO, HAVE DISCUSSIONS BEEN
CLASSIFIED? IF CLASSIFIED, AT WHAT LEVEL? IN THE MOST
PRECISE TERMS POSSIBLE, HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO THESE
QUESTIONS: WHAT IS TRANET; WHAT IS ITS PRODUCT, AND WHO
(AUSTRALIAN OR US) BENEFITS MOST FROM STATION 112? DOES
TRANET HAVE A SIGNIFICANT DEFENSE APPLICATION? IF SO,
(AND IF CLASSIFIED) IS THE SENSITIVITY SUCH THAT WE SHOULD
CLASSIFY THE STATION TO PROTECT THE PRODUCT? WHAT WOULD
THE IMPLICATIONS BE FOR THE WORLD-WIDE NET IF STATION 112
WAS CLASSIFIED? (EMB NOTE: ADOD IS CONCERNED THAT
CLASSIFYING 112 COULD CAUSE A "COVER" PROBLEM FOR ALL
OTHER TRANET STATIONS.) AS CONCERNS PARA 5 REFTEL AND
INTRODUCTION OF NEW EQUIPMENT: WHAT ARE THE "ADDITIONAL
CAPABILITIES?" TO WHAT PURPOSE(S) WILL THE "INCREASED
LEVEL OF DATA ACQUISITION" BE APPLIED?

(B) RECOMMENDATION: THAT THE US GIVE URGENT CON-
SIDERATION TO PRESENTING A PROPOSAL ADVISING OF NEW
STATION EQUIPMENT AND STATE A US IMPERATIVE TO MAINTAIN
OPERATIONS. EMB NOTE: HAMILTON ORALLY DRAFTED THE
INTRODUCTION OF THE PROPOSAL: "RECOGNIZING A US NEED TO
MAINTAIN STATION 112 OPERATIONS, AND A DESIRE FOR
AUSTRALIA TO REMAIN INVOLVED, IT IS PROPOSED..")

6. WE FEEL THAT, AS IN CASE OF HAROLD E. HOLT, WE HAVE
A RESPONSIBILITY TO ASSIST IN DE-FUZING THE TRANET ISSUE
WITHOUT APPEARING TO FAVOR EITHER POLITICAL SIDE. DESPITE
THIS, WE HAVE A GROWING CONCERN THAT WE ARE SQUARELY ON
THE DEFENSIVE, AND THAT THE SERIES OF DISCUSSIONS ON JOINT
FACILITIES COULD EXPAND IN COMPLEXITY AND SENSITIVITY,
INVOLVING MORE IMPORTANT FACILITIES. ACCORDINGLY, WE FEEL
SOME INITIATIVE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THIS POINT TO
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REVERSE OR AT LEAST HALT OUR DEFENSIVE STANCE. FROM OUR
VANTAGE POINT, TRANET APPEARS TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY
TO STOP BEING DEFENSIVE IN THAT HAMILTON PROPOSED WORDING
(ASSUMING US AGREES TO ADVANCE A PROPOSAL) COULD BE
REVERSED, THEREBY REVERSING PRIME USER/BENEIFICIARY
EMPHASIS, E.G., " RECOGNIZING AUSTRALIAN INTEREST TO

MAINTAIN TRANET OPERATION, AND THE DESIRE OF THE US TO
REMAIN INVOLVED, IT IS PROPOSED..." UNFORTUNATELY,
WE ARE UNABLE TO ASSESS THE ESSENTIALITY OF TRANET TO THE
US, HENCE A CORRESPONDING WILLINGNESS TO REVERSE PRIME
USER EMPHASIS. OUR ANALYSIS OF AUSTRALIAN DESIRE TO
RETAIN TRANET FOR GEODESY REASONS IS THAT IT IS
SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO SUGGEST THEY WILL ACCEPT A
REVERSED READING. IT IS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT REVERSING
EMPHASIS IMPLIES SOME WILLINGNESS TO ABANDON STATION 112
OPERATION IF AUSTRALIA ASSIGNS LESS IMPORTANCE THAN WE
PERCEIVE. NOTWITHSTANDING, THIS TIME AND THIS SYSTEM MAY
PRESENT THE OPPORTUNITY TOMAKE THE POINT ---THAT THIS
AND OTHER FACILITIES ARE OF KEY IMPORTANCE TO AUSTRALIA
AS WELL AS TO THE US. ASIDE FROM SUCH CONSIDERATIONS,
EMB IS COMMITTED TO RESPOND TO ADOD QUESTION/RECOMMEND-
TIONS (PARA 5) ON AN "URGENT BASIS" --(AUSTRALIAN WORDS).
YOUR ASSISTANCE/ANALYSIS WOULD BE WELCOMED. SQUIRE

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